



BRILL

The Chained Hero: The Cave and the Labyrinth

Author(s): Levon Abrahamian

Source: *Iran & the Caucasus*, 2007, Vol. 11, No. 1 (2007), pp. 89-99

Published by: Brill

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25597317>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Brill is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Iran & the Caucasus*



BRILL

Iran and the Caucasus 11 (2007) 89-99



The Chained Hero: The Cave and the Labyrinth

Levon Abrahamian

*Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography
Armenian Academy of Sciences, Yerevan*

Abstract

The article is a comparative study of the well-known mythological *sujet* of the chained hero and another popular motif, that of the labyrinth. The author lists in brief various versions of the legend about the chained hero, widespread in the Caucasian-Near Eastern region, emphasising the most significant details: tracing the motif of theomachy as a sin, and retribution common for all of them. The paper includes the analysis of such features of the chained hero as his ambivalence going back to the archetypal *twoness*; twins representing a positive character and that of the snake (dragon) nature. Another reason for the ambivalence of the chained hero is his chthonic nature, observable in the place of his imprisonment or his environment. The cave here is approximating to a labyrinth-like covert, and the idea of a labyrinth, in its turn, points to the motif of initiation. The Caucasian-Near Eastern complex of the stories about the chained/neutralised chthonic heroes allows to anew elucidate the cave-labyrinth theme in the vast proto-Caucasian context, and to probably give original interpretations to newly found artefacts depicting respective symbols.

Keywords

Chained Hero, Theomachy, Sin and Retribution, Prometheus, Dragon-fighting, Cave, Labyrinth, Caucasian Mythology

The article is a comparative study of the well-known mythological *sujet* of the chained hero and another popular motif, that of the labyrinth. Being preliminary in essence, the analysis is not aimed at proving any genetic ties between these themes, though they can possibly belong to the same archaic ethno-cultural milieu, in particular, to the proto-Caucasian one, which may have been much wider than the Caucasus itself.

Since the time of Hesiodos and Aeschylus, the theme of the chained hero has always attracted attention to the Caucasus. The researchers

have tried to find out how Prometheus is related to the Caucasus, and to define the possible connection between this character and the local chained heroes. That would help to ascertain the ethnic and cultural boundaries of the Caucasian parallels, without ignoring, at the same time, their inherent characteristics, observable on a comparative ground only.¹ However, the excessive extension of both the geographical and semantic boundaries of the *sujet* should be avoided either, as it may hamper the analysis, particularly, in discerning the Caucasian or, more precisely, proto-Caucasian elements of the myth. Attempts have also been made to distinguish the Caucasian and the Indo-European elements of the theme, and to trace possible ways of their interaction.² On the whole, no matter how promising the further scrutiny of the ancient Graeco-Caucasian ties may seem, the over-close attention to the Promethean *sujet* confines, to a certain extent, the idea of the chained hero itself.

First of all, let us list in brief some versions of the chained hero plot,³ emphasising only essential details, relevant for our research, and answering the questions “whom?”, “where?”, and “what for?”.

The Armenian prince Artawazd was imprisoned in one of the caves on the top of Mount Masis; the reason was the unconcealed envy towards his father's posthumous fame (in Xorenac'i's (II, 61) interpretation,⁴ sort of rational criticism of lavishness of pagan funeral rites). The legend, narrated by Movsēs Xorenac'i with incredulity, says that in case Artawazd unchains himself, he will destroy the world.

¹ See, e.g. M. Čikovani, *Narodnyj gruzinskij epos o prikovannom Amirani*, Moscow, 1966: 65, 104-105; E. Meletinskij, *Proisxoždenie geroičeskogo eposa*, Moscow, 1963: 218-219; for a survey and analysis of the myths about the neutralised heroes with explicit or inherent demonic nature, see M. Abelean, “Hay žolovrdakan aṛaspelnerə M. Xorenac'u Hayoc' Patmut'ean mej”, *Erker*, h. 8: Erevan, 1985: 188-193.

² On the review and analyses of such approaches, proposed, in particular, by G. Dumézil and G. Charachidzé, see Ch. Wilhelm. “Prometheus and the Caucasus: The Origins of the Prometheus Myth”, *Proceedings of the Ninth Annual UCLA Indo-European Conference*, Washington, D. C., 1998 (*Journal of Indo-European Studies Monograph Series*, No. 28): 150-155.

³ On the versions of this *sujet* and the relevant literature, see the respective entries in: *Mify narodov mira*, tom 1, Moscow, 1980; tom 2, 1982. The Caucasian stories from the so-called Promethean cycle are summarised in a short but substantial article by G. Dumézil, in *Götter und Mythen der kaukasischen und iranischen Völker*, ed. by H. W. Haussig, Stuttgart, 1986: 44-46; cf. also H. Fähnrich, *Lexicon georgische Mythologie*, Wiesbaden, 1999: 31-33.

⁴ The critical edition, see Movsēs Xorenac'i, *Patmut'iwn hayoc'*, M. Abelean, S. Harut'iwnian (eds.), Erevan, 1991.

The Abkhaz warrior Abrskil, the protector of his people, was chained to the iron pillar in a cave (identified with Chilou cave in the Ochamchir region); the reason was that he had started struggling against the supreme god. In one of the versions, when Abrskil regains freedom, he is struck blind by the sunshine and retreats to the mountains.

The Ossetic hero Art'awyz was nailed inside the moon. He had been created in order to teach people kindness, but he preferred to do the exact contrary. In case Art'awyz gets away, he will devour the people.⁵



A Labyrinth-like Bronze Artefact from the Sevan Lake Basin, 10th-9th centuries B.C.
(By Courtesy of Historical Museum of Armenia, Yerevan)

The Georgian epic hero Amirani was imprisoned in a cave in the Caucasian range for his theomachy.

In Greece, Prometheus was chained to the mountain and tortured, because he had cheated Zeus and helped people to obtain fire; later Herakles released him.

Daḥḥāk, the alien king of Iran, was chained in the crater of the dormant volcano Damavand. The reason was that he had established a thousand year (less one day) lasting reign of evil. This character goes back to the Old Iranian dragon Aži Dahāka- (according to Xorenac'i,

⁵ However, this legend has, likely, an Armenian background (see Narine Gevorgian's paper in this issue of *Iran and the Caucasus*).

Biwraspi Aždahak),⁶ who was also chained and hung up inside the crater of the same volcano. He will break loose before the end of the world and reign for a short period.

The earth was unable to carry the Armenian epic hero Mher Junior, so Mher entered one of the cliffs of Lake Van, called Aḡrawak'ar ("the Raven rock"), and will stay there till the end of the old era and the beginning of the new, the better one. The main reason was the curse of his father, whom he had not recognised and with whom he engaged in a joust (an allusion to a challenge to God as well). According to one of the versions, he was tied to the rock, his kidneys being pecked out by a raven (just like eagles devouring Prometheus' or Amirani's livers).

In all the *sujets*, occurs the motif of a sin and a punishment, retribution, be it transparent or implicitly perceivable. Setting apart the didactic most probably, later interpretations of the myth, it is quite clear that the sin is actually the rivalry with god (father). In any way, the problem of a sin, even if not clearly stated, always exists in the *sujets* of the chained heroes: cf., for example, Trita in the well,⁷ or Gregory the Illuminator tossed in the jail-hole (with the implicit theme of the father's sin). In this context, Jesus Christ, likewise, can be approached as a nailed hero, iconographic mount Golgotha making the Crucifix typologically closer to the *sujet* under consideration. But at the same time, Jesus Christ assumes the primordial sin of man's forefathers—disobedience to the will of God (cf. rivalry with god/father).

Still, the theme of the sin seems to have appeared as a result of a later transformation of the topic. Apparently, another, more archaic motif is also obvious—the primordial, even the inherent sinfulness/wickedness of the punished hero. Motifs of theomachy always imply the strong, sovereign power of the supreme god in the context of the Basic myth—in the family structure of the myth (a son commits a sin towards his father).⁸ Whereas, the motif of the primordial wickedness, evidently,

⁶ The genuine New Iranian continuation of OIr. *Aži-dahāka*—is, of course, *aždahā* "dragon"; in Pahlavi *Aži-dahāk*, *Aždahāk*, Manichaean MPers. and Parth. *azdahāg*, *aždahāg*. In Classical New Persian we might have also **zahāk*/**žahāk*, while *ḍahḥāk* is an intentionally Arabicised artificial form invented by Firdousi for giving the character a hostile, anti-Iranian characteristic.

⁷ A. A. Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, Strassburg, 1897: 67; see also V. N. Toporov, "Ob otrāženii odnogo indoevropejskogo mifa v drevnearmyanskoj tradicii", *Patma-banasirakan handes*, N 3 (1977): 94, f. n. 31.

⁸ On the Basic (Indo-European) myth, see in detail V. V. Ivanov, V. N. Toporov, *Issledovaniya v oblasti slavyanskix drevnostej*, Moscow, 1974; eadem, "Indoevropejskaya mifologiya", *Mify narodov mira*, tom 1: 527–533.

goes back to the more archaic mythologem of twins,⁹ particularly, to the so-called serpent code of one of them, that of a dragon nature. From the point of phenomenology of religion, the correlation between the two approaches can be compared to monotheism and dualism correspondingly.

The myth about Artawazd combines both aspects of the theme of the chained hero—his rivalry with father and his primordial snake nature: according to the legend, narrated mistrustfully by Xorenac'i, Artawazd, in his babyhood, had been kidnapped by the descendants of Aždahak and replaced with a demon (II.61), and hence is proved Artawazd's demonic, or snake nature, as Aži Dahāka- means “dragon (or “snake”) Dahāka-”. Incidentally, the myth about Artawazd illustrates the intricate interlacing of the Armenian and Iranian traditions.

The primordial sinfulness (the dragon nature) is obviously seen in the personal heroic characteristics of Mher Junior as well: the earth cannot carry him (cf. the permanent connection between a sin and heaviness), his coming out of the cave is associated with the end of the world (cf. the Doomsday on Second Coming of Christ, who had fetched away from the cross and from the sepulchral cave). A striking illustration of Daḥḥāk's snake nature is the non-round number of the days of his reign. The Abkhazian Abrskil was struck blind when getting out of the cave: cf. the burning out of the dragon (*višapi*) by the sun in the Georgian myth, as well as the burning out of the *višap*, whose age is approaching a round number¹⁰ in the Armenian tradition.

Finally, worth mentioning is the chthonic parentage of Prometheus (he is the son of the Titan Iapetos), who has, in fact, been already transformed into a cultural hero of the genre of heroic deeds—Prometheus' release does not endanger the safety of the world.

So, the hero chained in a cave/to a rock is supposed to be initially “bad”. At first site, this statement does not consort with the character of the Urartian god Ḫaldi,¹¹ who lives in the same rock where the Arme-

⁹ L. A. Abramyan (L. H. Abrahamian), A. G. Demirxanyan, “Mifologema bliznecov i mirovov derevo”, *Patma-banasirakan handes*, N 4 (1985): 66–84.

¹⁰ For the round number of a hero and a non-round one of an anti-hero, see V. Ayrapetyan, *Tolkuya slovo: Opyt germenevtiki po-russki*, Moscow, 2001: b123; L. Abramyan, V. Ayrapetyan, G. Arakelyan, A. Gulyan, *Razgovor o kruglyx i absolyutnyx čislax*, Erevan, 1981–1984 (manuscript).

¹¹ I. M. D'yakonov, “K voprosu o simvole Ḫaldi”, *Drevnij Vostok*, N 4, Erevan, 1983: 190–194; on the connection of Ḫaldi with Mithra, see S. Hmayakyan, *Vani t'agavorut'yan petakan krona*, Erevan, 1990: 33–38; A. Petrosyan, *Armjanskij epos i mifologiya*, Erevan, 2002: 98–103; on the relation of Ḫaldi to the Armenian epic personages, see also idem, “Urartakan glxavor astvacneri eřyakə ev petut'yan iřxoł vernaxavi cagman

nian epic tradition places Mher Junior (cf. also the Mesopotamian deities living in *ziggurats*, the symbols of mountains).¹² However, one can assume that the fear of the lord of the cave/rock is a fontal phenomenon, which is earlier than his veneration, or, at least, both are concurrent with each other (cf. the fear of/the love towards father, a king). Haldi seems to have possessed both the characteristics of the chained heroes and those of regeneration, revival (cf. the grape-cult related to him); the latter having no direct associations with the chained heroes, but being ascribed to them due to pseudo-revival interpretations of the motif, eschatological in its essence.¹³

The last circumstance should be referred in detail, since there exists quite an obvious and stable connection between the revival and the motif of the chained hero. It mainly concerns the figure of Mher Junior: all definitions given to him bear the pathos of revival, which has become a *locus communis* and almost a national marker for the Armenians. Mher gets out of the rock, when justice is restored and the era of welfare comes. Meanwhile, as it has been already mentioned, the liberation of such heroes inaugurates, first of all, the end of the world. The possible final liberation of the Georgian hero Amirani, in this regard, can be related to revival even to a lesser degree. However, the idea of revival occurs in the epic as well, but in the interim episode, not in the finale. The revival is connected here with the motif of initiation, which is of utmost importance for the proper understanding of the mythologem of the chained hero as it is, even though some similar *sujets* contain no explicit motifs of initiation.

In the epic of Amirani, as it has been noted by many scholars,¹⁴ the motif of initiation is apparent in the episode when Amirani, having been swallowed by a black dragon (*devi*), comes out by hacking the beast's belly (side).¹⁵ It is worthy of note that, in some variants, Amirani infixes a wooden sieve in the place of his exit from the beast's belly, so that the sun, if swallowed by the demon (the reason of the solar eclipses) could

xndirā", *Patma-banasirakan handes*, N 2 (2002): 256-266; idem, "Urartskij Xaldi i geroi, zatočennye v skalu i roždyonnye iz skaly", *Arxelologiya, etnologiya i fol'kloristika Kavkaza*, Ečmiadzin, 2003: 333-334.

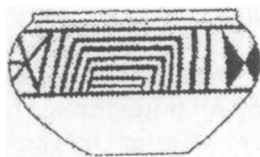
¹² See H. Petrosyan, "The Sacred Mountain", *Armenian Folk Arts, Culture, and Identity*, L. Abrahamian, N. Sweezy (eds.), Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2001: 33.

¹³ On the eschatological context of the story of Mher Junior, see S. Harutyunyan, *Hay araspelabanut'yun*, Beirut, 2000: 463-478.

¹⁴ Cf., e. g. Meletinskij, op. cit.: 226.

¹⁵ Čikovani, op. cit.: 87, 96-97, 209, 222-223, 234, 240, 246, 254-255, 260-261, 278, 291, 297, 301, 305.

make its way out to the sky by burning the sieve.¹⁶ In this version, unlike many others, the demon is not annihilated once and forever. Similar to the classic dragon-like patron of initiation, swallowing and disgorging those passing the rite of initiation, he keeps alive in order to provide natural cycles and cultural rituals. Usually, Amirani refuses to be excreted from the natural holes of the demon, and even from its side, just not to become an object of derision; he prefers to get out by himself, even if from the beast's side. Yet, they flout at him, applying sneering nicknames (in the beast's belly, Amirani, like many other characters passing the rite of initiation all over the world, loses his hair).¹⁷ The epos of Amirani thus illustrates how the passive aspect of initiation is transformed into an active, not less universal one, which has yet no concern with the swallowing patron of initiation.¹⁸



A Late Bronze Age Ceramic Vessel from Shirak, Armenia
(Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, Yerevan)

It is interesting to note, that Jesus Christ, who, to a certain extent, can be typologically related to the chained heroes (His crucifixion on the "mount", sepulchral cave, Second Coming), is passing the rite of initiation in the Jordan waters, like Amirani is initiated in the waters of death; the latter finally celebrates a victory over the *višapi* (dragon).¹⁹ Thus, the typologically comparable *sujets* contain non-typological correspondences, which can throw more light on the Christian mythology.

The motif of initiation reveals also another non-typological connection of two quite different mythological personages. Amirani, in accord

¹⁶ Ibid.: 222-223.

¹⁷ On the alopecia of a hero in a monster's belly, see L. Abrahamyan, "Oblysenie geroia i smert' Axilla", *Semiotika i problemy kommunikacii (Tezisy dokladov)*, Erevan, 1982: 33-37; see also idem, "Lysina Gerakla, pyatka Axilla i nogi Edipa v ritual'no-mifologičeskom kontekste", *Armjanskij gumanitarnyj vestnik*, v.1, Erevan, (2006): 43-60.

¹⁸ L. Abramyan, "Zmej u istočnika", *Istoriko-etnografičeskie issledovaniya po fol'kloru*, Moscow, 1994: 20-34.

¹⁹ L. Abramyan, "Xristos kak zmeeborec: Cerkovnaya tradiciya i pamyat' xudožnika", *Mifologičeskie predstavleniya v narodnom tvorčestve*, Moscow, 1993: 165-179. The snake-fighting and the initiation in the episode of Baptism do not occur in the Gospels, but appear in their oral and pictorial interpretations.

with his mother's will, was extracted premature from his mother's womb; after that he remained for three months in a cow's belly, and for another three—in that of a bull. When Amirani is born, they either leave him near a spring or throw him into the sea.²⁰ In the Ossetic version, premature Amirani was given to the *Donbetyrs* in the sea, where his growth was again connected with a cow and a bull. Amirani's brothers saw him for the first time, when he was coming out of the sea with a cow and a bull, sucking the cow's udder and playing joyfully on the bull's back.²¹ The connection "a woman, a cow, a bull", but in reverse order, can be traced in the plot of the Minotaur's conception: Poseidon's bull (or Poseidon himself—the equivalent of Donbetyr—in a bull shape),²² possesses Pasiphae, king Minos' wife, who shelters herself inside a wooden cow. The reverse order can be explained by the fact that, in the case of Amirani we deal with a birth, while in the case of the Minotaur—with a conception. The monster Minotaur is placed in a labyrinth, so that he could not find the way out (cf. the chained heroes of chthonic origin, who are not able to fetch away for a variety of reasons: their chains are being renovated from time to time; the earth is not able to carry them; they wait for the end of the world). The facts that Amirani was born in a cave and later was imprisoned there for ages, allude to his chthonic origin²³ (cf. the birth and the burial of Jesus in a cave; the birth of Mithra from a stone; and the return of his epic equivalents in other traditions into stones).²⁴ Unlike Amirani, who passes the rite of initiation by killing the dragon at the beginning or in the middle of his story, and finally gets chained in a cave, the analogue of the labyrinth, the Minotaur remains the monster imprisoned "forever" in a labyrinth and later killed by his step-brother Theseus (another offspring of Poseidon);²⁵ the initiatory nature of the latter has been discussed more than once. By the way, in other episodes of his heroic biography, Theseus appears as a twin-hero passing the rite of initiation: he goes to Hades together with his friend Pirithus (*Πειρίθοος*), in order to steal the latter's bride, the goddess of the underworld Persephone. As a result, Pirithus remains captured there forever, while The-

²⁰ Čikovani, op. cit.: 94-96.

²¹ Ibid.: 190-191.

²² A. F. Losev, "Posejdon", *Mify narodov mira*, tom 2: 323-324.

²³ Meletinskij, op. cit.: 223.

²⁴ On the heroes born from stone and going back into stone, see Petrosyan, *Urartskij Xaldi...*: 333-334.

²⁵ On Theseus and the Minotaur as Poseidon's heroic and monstrous sons, see Losev, op. cit.: 324.

seus is freed by Herakles soon after (Apollodoros, *Bibliotheca*, I, 23).²⁶ The twoness of a dragon-slayer corresponding to the snake-code of the mythologem of the first twins can be also noticed in Teššub, possibly, the Hurrian parallel of Theseus.²⁷ Teššub's main enemy is his step-brother, the rock-born stone monster Ullikummi (Ullikumme).²⁸

Unlike Teššub and Theseus, Amirani has no antagonist brothers among his enemies; on the contrary, his two brothers share all his heroic ventures, except the fatal fight against God. All the three constitute a triad of the Thought (*Usipi*), the Word (*Badri*) and the Deed (*Amirani*).²⁹ It is noteworthy that the same kind of a triad in the Armenian epic tradition includes the epic hero Mher Senior personifying the heroic Deed, his brother Vociferous Ohan possessing sonorous voice, like *Badri*, and personifying the sound shape of the Word, and Coward Vergo, always doubting and diffident, a common characteristic of the Thought. Mher Junior, the Mithraic version of Mher Senior, just like another Mithraic character, Amirani, struggles against god/father all alone. It also should be noticed that Prometheus ("foresight", literally "one who foresees, forebodes") has a brother with quite an opposite name Epimetheus ("wise behindhand"),³⁰ having much more in common with Amirani than "intellectual" Prometheus, the latter being traditionally compared to Amirani.

It is interesting that in one of the variants of the initiation episode, Amirani's enemy turns out to be a demon once punished for theomachy,³¹ i. e. in an earlier episode, Amirani fights with a rival, whose feature he acquires in the finale. This fight with himself can be traced in the episode, when the hero being close to liberation, himself tightens his gyves. Such a fight with himself is typical for the ambivalent chained

²⁶ See Apollodori *Bibliotheca*, ed. R. Wagner, Lipsiae, 1926.

²⁷ Teššub/Teišeba was compared with Theseus by A. Petrosyan (*Armyanskij epos i mifologiya*: 52-54); an axe being an attribute of the Hurro-Urartian thunder-god, can be compared with the double pole-axe, the λάβρυς, a possible etymon of the labyrinth (λαβύρινθος, as if a "Haus der Doppelaxt"), where Theseus killed the Minotaur (cf. H. Frisk, *Griechisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Bd. II, Heidelberg, 1973: 67).

²⁸ On the archetypal twoness of the chained hero, see L. Abramyan, "Parnye obrazy "Sasna c'rer": bliznecy, svodnye brat'ya, dvojstvennyye geroi", *Armyanskij epos "David Sasunskij" i mirovoe epičeskoe nasledie* (4-6 November, 2004, Caxkadzor), Erevan: 61-67.

²⁹ Cf. G. Charachidzé, *Prométhée ou le Caucase: Essai de mythologie contrastive*, Paris, 1986: 299.

³⁰ On the contraposition of the Promethean order "Thought—Word—Deed" and the Epimethean order "Deed—Word—Thought", see Ayrapetyan, op. cit., Index, s. v.

³¹ Čikovani, op. cit.: 234.

heroes: Amirani, the bearer of Mithra's characteristics, is punished in some versions of the epic, for the repeated oath-breaking, whereas Mithra being the god of agreement and thus the guarantor of observance of a treaty.³²

A cave as a place of imprisonment/an environment of a harmful being is a matter of peculiar interest. In the context of the myth under discussion, the cave is approximating to a labyrinth-like covert, called in Armenian *bavił*,³³ in iconography it is a natural cave labyrinth with one entry. I tried to show elsewhere³⁴ how such caves are related to the snake-shaped figure of the patron of initiation, whose entrails represent the labyrinthine ways to rebirth for those swallowed by the monster and passing the initiation. One of the demonstrative examples is in the episode when Amirani is swallowed by the demon.

Another type of a labyrinth is a "cultural" one, in iconography approximating to the bilateral type (with two and, in principle, with several entries), which is closer to the ordinary understanding of a labyrinth. This kind of labyrinth is very much alike the one on Crete built by Daedalus for the Minotaur, where his brother Theseus killed the latter, having entered the labyrinth in order to pass the initiation.³⁵

The Caucasian-Near Eastern complex of the motifs about the chained/neutralised chthonic hero allows elucidating anew the cave-labyrinth theme in the vast proto-Caucasian context—from the Caucasian caves to Crete-Etruscan labyrinths. In this regard, the semasiological analysis of the related terms, having so far no convincing explanations, is of special interest. The etymology of the Armenian *bavił* from Babylon, Babel,³⁶ by a 19th Armenian priest (apud: Ačařean, *ibid.*), acquires in this regard a new semantic dimension. On the other hand, the

³² See the detailed bibliography on the subject, in V. N. Toporov, "Mitra", *Mify narodov mira*, tom 2: 154-157.

³³ See Hr. Ačařean, *Hayereni armatakan bařaran*, ht. 1, Erevan, 1971: 433; G. Ĵahukyan, "Stugabanut'yunner", *Patma-banasirakan handes*, N 2 (1991): 36-37.

³⁴ See L. Abrahamyan, "Baviłi cisa-ařaspelabanakan akunk'nera", *Hanrapetakan gitakan nstařjan, nvirvac 1990-1994 t't'. azgagrakan ev banagitakan hetazotut'yunneri ardyunk'nerin*, Zekuc'umneri himnadruyt'ner, Erevan, 1995: 3-4.

³⁵ A comprehensive essay on the labyrinth in various traditions with related bibliography, see L. de Freitas, in M. Eliade (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, vol. 8, New York-London, 1987: 411-419.

³⁶ Cf. the stable connection of Babylon with the labyrinth in the literature, both old (see E. N. Mečřerskaya, *Deyaniya ludy Fomy*, Moscow, 1990: 170, and f. n. 256: 209-210) and modern (cf. the well-known novel by J. L. Borges, *The Two Kings and their Two Labyrinths*), and, probably, in the historical reality (F. M. Th. Böhl, "Zum Babylonischen Ursprung des Labyrinths", *Analecta Orientalia*, 12, Roma, 1935: 6-23).

bronze-age artefacts recently found in Armenia—the labyrinth-like items (of unknown use) with a bull head in the centre (cf. the Minotaur), as well as the schematic depictions of a double pole-axe (the *λάβρος*, from which the *labyrinth* may be derived) in combination with the meander (probably, the symbol of a labyrinth)—can get quite original interpretations.